



JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

Resolution

Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care

Whereas all children need safe, permanent families that love, nurture, protect, and guide them;

Whereas, although foster care is absolutely critical to protecting children who cannot stay safely in their own homes, it is intended to be a short-term refuge rather than a long-term saga;

Whereas, on an average day, California has approximately 97,000 children in foster care;

Whereas, although the number of all children in California account for approximately 13 percent of all children in the United States, California children in foster care comprise approximately 19 percent of the total United States foster care population;

Whereas in California, of the more than 491,000 referrals to social services of child abuse or neglect, approximately 110,000 or 22 percent, were substantiated by child welfare staff;

Whereas youth who leave the foster care system are often ill prepared for what follows—more than half are unemployed, almost a third become homeless, and one in five will be incarcerated within two years;

Whereas the California Judicial Council recognizes that the safety, permanency, and well-being of children under court supervision is paramount;

Whereas the Judicial Branch is dedicated to improving the quality of justice and services to meet the diverse needs of children, youth, and families in California by building partnerships with other local and statewide agencies and professions that work with children and families throughout our state;

Whereas, although there have been individual efforts to see that children are safe in foster care, and efforts to improve the judicial process, systemic improvements are needed to meet the needs of children in foster care and in the child welfare system, and these improvements can best be achieved through collaboration between the courts, child welfare, education, medical, and mental health partners, and other public and private agencies and individuals;

Whereas institutionalization of this collaboration will ensure that systemic improvements are sought and achieved beyond the terms of office of individual members of the judiciary, agency directors, and elected officials;

Whereas the state's ability to respond to the needs of vulnerable children is primarily financially supported by federal funding and whereas federal guidelines on the use of funds limits California's ability to invest those limited resources in smarter and more effective ways to benefit children and families;

Now, therefore, be it resolved

That a Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care is established as a high-level, multidisciplinary body to provide leadership and recommendations to improve the ability of the federal government, California's state and local agencies, and the courts to protect children in California by helping them to become part of a permanent family that will provide a safe, stable, and secure home;

That, in its deliberations, the Commission shall develop recommendations

- Creating a set of comprehensive strategies and effective approaches to reduce the number of children in foster care by reducing the number of children entering foster care and reducing the length of time in foster care while ensuring they have safe, secure, and stable homes
- Successfully implementing the Judicial Council's goals and objectives, including those on ensuring appropriate judicial and staff resources and establishing stable funding for juvenile courts
- Successfully implementing the recommendations of the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care, as adopted by the Judicial Council, including those on strengthening court oversight, improving collaboration, and ensuring flexible funding
- Advocating effective approaches to secure greater flexibility for federal funding so that California can meet the critical objective of permanency through prevention, early intervention, reunification, guardianship, and adoption
- Ensuring that all children receive sufficient mental health, health care, education, and other services whether they reside with family, foster parents, relatives, adoptive parents, or in other placements
- Institutionalizing a permanent collaborative model that will ensure that systemic improvements are sought and achieved beyond the tenure of this Commission
- Proposing other initiatives it deems appropriate;

That the Commission, led by Justice Carlos R. Moreno of the California Supreme Court, shall conduct its inquiry in a manner that broadens public awareness of and support for meeting the needs of vulnerable children and families;

That at the conclusion of the Commission's investigation and deliberations, the Commission will host a statewide conference for multidisciplinary teams from each county for the purpose of establishing permanent foster care commissions in each county; and

That the Commission shall file an interim and final report with the California Judicial Council, recommending appropriate action to serve and meet the needs of children and families in California's foster care and child welfare system.

Signed at San Francisco, California, this ninth day of March, 2006


RONALD M. GEORGE

Chief Justice of California and
Chair of the Judicial Council of California


WILLIAM C. VICKREY

Administrative Director of the Courts